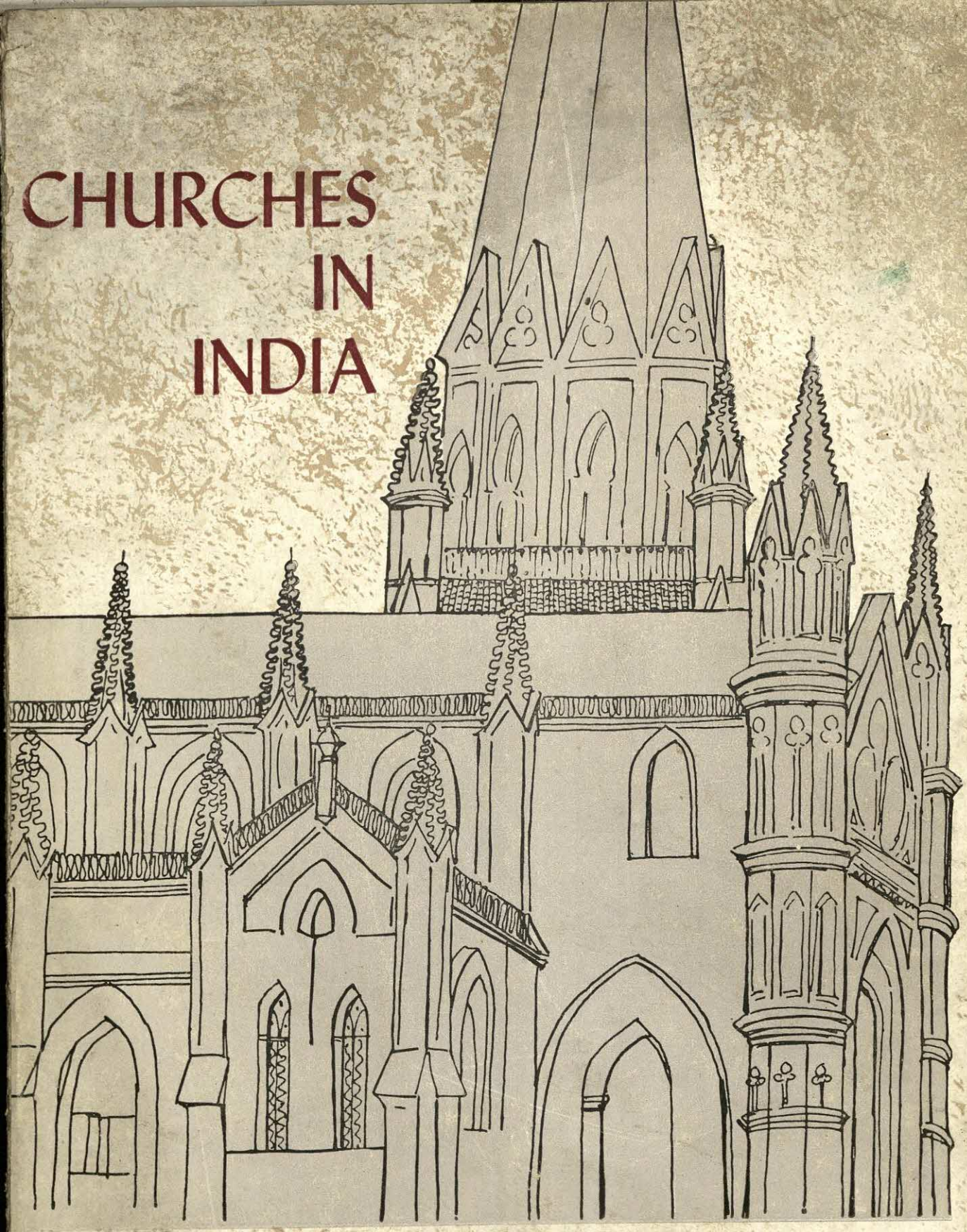
CHURCHES IN INDIA



P. THOMAS

STATE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
KANPUR

CHURCHES IN INDIA

2112

By the same author

CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN
EPICS, MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF INDIA
THE STORY OF THE CULTURAL EMPIRE OF INDIA
COLONISTS AND FOREIGN MISSIONARIES OF ANCIENT INDIA
HINDU RELIGION, CUSTOMS AND MANNERS
INDIAN WOMEN THROUGH THE AGES

THE APOSTLE THOMAS

STATE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION * NAGPUR *

CHURCHES IN INDIA

by

P. THOMAS

2112
5186

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

First Printed November 1964 (*Agrahayana* 1886)
Reprinted December 1964 (*Pausa* 1886)

Price : Rs. 2·75

27.9.2007
2612

PUBLISHED BY THE DIRECTOR, PUBLICATIONS DIVISION, DELHI-6, AND PRINTED BY THE MANAGER, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA PRESS, FARIDABAD, INDIA

AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A list of the more important of the works I have consulted is given in the bibliography appended to this book, and readers desiring detailed information about churches and Christians in India will, I hope, find it useful.

I have received considerable help from several friends, of whom I may particularly mention Rev. Fr. Thomas Moothedan, Dr. M. I. Koreth, Rev. E. V. Mathew, Mr. T. I. Kochuvarkey, Mr. M. K. John and Mr. C. V. Iyyu. Above all, I must record my gratitude to Mr. K. M. Mathew, Editor, *Malayala Manorama,* Kottayam, for getting several photographs for me, and to Mr. D. N. Marshall, Librarian, and Mr. Bernard Anderson, Assistant Librarian, Bombay University Library, whose thorough knowledge of books on various subjects has been of immense help to me.

East Fort,
Trichur, Kerala.

P. THOMAS

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The publishers are grateful to the many Christian institutions which promptly responded to their request for photographs to illustrate this publication. Since it was not possible to include in the publication all the photographs that were received, a selection had to be made. In making the selection, the publishers received valuable help from Rev. Fr. C. P. Saldanha, S.J., of St. Xavier's School, Delhi.

The publishers are conscious of the fact that the illustrations do not represent a complete coverage of all the Churches in the country. However, they hope to make good the omissions in the next edition of the publication.

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA .. .. Primitive Indian Church—Immigrants and Missions from Western Asia—The Portuguese in India—The British Period—Christianity in India at Present	9
II.	THE CHURCH AS A CENTRE OF RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL LIFE .. .. Religious Life in Indian Churches—The Church and Cultural Life—The Church and Social Life—Civic Functions of Churches	19
III.	CHURCH ART AND ARCHITECTURE .. .. Early Indian Churches—European Styles in Indian Church-Building —Modern Trends	28
IV.	SOME IMPORTANT CHURCHES .. .. Catholic Churches—Churches of Non-Catholic Eastern Rites—Protestant Churches	45
	SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	56

Chapter I

CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA

INDIAN Christians trace the origin of their church to the Apostle Thomas who is believed to have visited India and preached the gospel here. The traditions and lore of Kerala Christians, in particular, are rich in legends about the advent of the Apostle and his work among the people.

Though contemporary historical evidence is lacking, there is nothing improbable in the Kerala tradition of the Apostolic origin of the church in India. South India, in ancient times, was in active contact with Judea and the Roman world, and there was a good deal of seaborne trade between the ports of the West Coast and those on the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. The Hebrew king Solomon (10th century B.C.) is believed to have obtained the "ivory, apes and peacocks", mentioned in the *Old Testament,* from the Malabar Coast. The Hebrew word for peacock is an adaptation of the Tamil "Tukkei" (bird with splendid tail); historians consider this as undeniable proof that the Hebrews, who had no peacocks, got the bird and its name from the Tamil country.

South India had a flourishing commerce with the Roman Empire. Roman currency was legal tender in the main cities of South India, and hoards of Roman coins have been discovered in Kerala, Mysore and adjoining Tamil Districts. A Pandyan king is recorded to have sent an embassy to Augustus Caesar to congratulate him on his accession to the throne. From Tamil literature we find that the Pandyans, for show, used to keep Roman mercenaries as sentinels in their palaces and as body-guards.

The most important port on the West Coast at the time was Musirs (from Mayuri Kotta, ancient name of Cranganore), and its main export was the far-famed peper of Kerala. Such was the price this precious commodity commanded in the Roman markets that Alaric the Goth, who invested Rome (408 A.D.), was persuaded to raise the seige by the offer of 3,000 lbs of pepper. Any middle class merchant in Kerala, by the way, could throw away this much pepper and not miss it, but in Europe, at the time, it was the ransom of the Roman Empire !

Musiris was an international emporium of transit trade between the Roman Empire and the Far East, and most of the great trading nations of the world, including the Jews, had their settlements in the port. A section of the Hebrew community of Kerala, known as Black Jews, trace their origin, like the Ben-i-Israel of Bombay and Poona, to the Babylonian Captivity (6th century B.C.), and another, called White Jews because of their lighter pigmentation, to the Dispersion under Romans in the 1st century A.D. Both had their original settlements

in Cranganore and had enjoyed rare privileges under benign Hindu rulers. With the destruction of Cranganore in 1524, during the war between the Portuguese and the Arabs, the Jews migrated to Cochin and built, in 1568, their famous synagogue, which is, at present, one of the main attractions of Cochin.

Kerala tradition would indicate that it was, mainly, to bring to the Jews of Cranganore the glad tidings of the advent of the Messiah that St. Thomas came to the city. The Apostles, it may be recalled, thought it their duty to acquaint the Jews of the Dispersion of this long-awaited national event. Anyway, Apostle Thomas did not confine his missionary activities to the Jews, but preached to the people of Kerala too. He is believed to have gathered a large following, founded seven churches in Kerala, and then gone to the Tamil country where he suffered martyrdom. It is interesting to note that some of the better class families of Kerala Christians trace their origin to four Brahmin families of Palur baptised by the Apostle.

External evidence, found in the writings of the early doctors of the church, supports the Indian tradition. A Syriac work, believed to be of the 4th century, gives a vivid description of the work of the Apostle Thomas in the kingdom of Gundaphoros, a king who ruled in North Western India. Jerome (4th century A.D.), Gregory of Tours (6th century) and several others have references to the Apostle Thomas and his work in India.

All told, available evidence would indicate that St. Thomas came to India by the overland route, and from the kingdom of Gundaphoros travelled by sea to Kerala and landed in Cranganore. The traditional date of his landing is 52 A.D. Indian Christians celebrated the 19th centenary of this event in 1952, and erected a monument at Azhikode, the pier of ancient Musiris.

The Primitive Indian Church

Whatever their origin, there were Christian communities in India in very early times, a fact accepted by all historians. In the second century of the Christian era, Pantaenus, an Alexandrian philosopher and missionary, is recorded to have visited India and found Christians here. In the famous Council of Nicea, held in 325 A.D., one of the delegates, John, signed as 'Bishop of Persia and Great India'. Cosmas, an Egyptian merchant called the Indian Voyager because of his far-flung trade connections with countries bordering on the Indian seas and his extensive travels, found Christians in different parts of India, particularly in the pepper country, but only the community of Kerala has survived the vicissitudes of history; the primitive Christians of Kerala were known as Nazranis or followers of the Nazarene (Jesus of Nazareth).

We know little about the early social and religious life of the Nazranis. In all probability they had a Dravidian liturgy. The acceptance of Christianity does not appear to have involved any revolutionary change in the life of the individual as 'conversion' in the European period did. Hinduism has always recognized the liberty of individual worship and, in ancient times, seldom took notice of a man's beliefs as long as he followed the social practices appropriate to his caste. The king, as a rule, was expected to respect the religions of all his subjects. Hence Kerala Christians were, in all pro-

bability, considered a sect like the Jains and Buddhists, who were numerous in South India in the early centuries of the Christian era.

Immigrants and Missions from Western Asia

Indian trade with the Roman Empire was not confined to the ports of South India. There were several important ports all along the western coastline, from the Cape to the mouth of the Indus, and all of these were in active commercial contact with Persia and the Western Asian Provinces of the Roman Empire. Besides, there were overland trade routes by way of Baluchistan and Afghanistan. With the conversion of Western Asia to Christianity, merchants and missionaries brought the new religion to several parts of India.

In the 4th century of the Christian era, according to the traditions of Kerala, a colony of Syrians, headed by a merchant named Canai Thoma or Thomas of Canaan, came to Cranganore and settled in the city. The migration of Syrians is attributed to persecution of Christians in Syria by the Sassanian Emperor Shahpur II. Thomas and his colonists were well received by the Perumal (titular name of the king of Kerala) who allotted a suburb of Cranganore for their residence. Thomas seems to have had far-flung business connections, and he appears in the Christian legend of Kerala as a confidant of the Perumal and the director of his commercial policy.

The Syrians established regular contacts between Kerala and the Christian centres in Western Asia and obtained Bishops for the Malabar Church from Mesopotamia and Persia, a practice that continued till the Portuguese stopped it. They introduced the Syrian Liturgy and the Nazranis, on this account, came to be known as Syrian Christians.

There was, it would appear, some trouble among the immigrants about the question of their intermarrying with the Nazranis. One section, called Nordists (Northerners, possibly because they occupied the northern part of the settlement) intermarried with them, while the Sudists (Southerners) decided to preserve the purity of their blood, and refused to intermarry. This racial division among Syrian Christians has continued to the present day, and Nordists and Sudists have many legends, not very complimentary to each other, explaining its origin. Anyway, the modern tendency is towards intermarriage and union of the two divisions.

The Syrians flourished under the patronage of the Perumals, and one of their treasured possessions at present is a copper plate grant by a Perumal, named Vira Raghava Chakravarthy (8th century A.D.), conferring certain rare privileges on the community.

From the sixth century till the expansion of Mongols under Chengiz Khan, Nestorian missionary enterprise was the dominant feature of Christianity in Asia. The Nestorians* had their patriarch in Mesopotamia; he received recognition from Muslim rulers and even enjoyed the patronage of some of them as he was not under the Pope with whom the Muslims had bitter quarrels and crusades. The Nestorians were particularly noted for their industry, learning and religious

* So called after Nestorius Patriarch of Constantinople (428—431), who held the doctrine of two substances in Christ, and fell out with his compeers.

zeal. "They pitched their tents in the camps of the wandering Tartar; they stood in the rice fields of the Punjab, and taught the fishermen by the Sea of Aral; they struggled through the vast deserts of Mongolia; the memorable inscriptions of Singanfu attest their victories in China; in India, the Zamorin himself respected their spiritual and courted their temporal authority".* During the heyday of their power, the Nestorians had congregations and churches in several parts of India, but during the Mongol expansion their great centres in Mesopotamia were destroyed, and later, the hordes of Tamerlane all but annihilated the community in its Western Asian strongholds. Their Indian congregations died of neglect, and at present the Nestorian Patriarch has no following in India, except in Kerala, as we shall see in the last chapter.

Another interesting community of Western Asian Christians, who had settlements and congregations in India and have come down to our own times, is the Armenian. The Armenians and their king had accepted Christianity towards the end of the 3rd century of the Christian Era. An enterprising people, Armenian traders and adventurers have, from early times, found their way to Indian cities. During the Muslim period, a large number of Armenians, because of their knowledge of Persian, which was the court language of the Muslims, found employment in the Muslim courts of India, and some of them attained eminence. Mirza Zulquarnain, under Jehangir, and Gregory Khan under Mir Kassim, for instance, rose to gubernatorial positions. Kwajah Martinus, a merchant of Agra, is mentioned by the Jesuits of the Moghul Mission as their patron, and Kwajah Safar, of Madras (died 1725), beautified St. Thomas Mount, Mylapore. The Armenians have settlements now in the more important of Indian cities.

The Portuguese in India

The Portuguese, who dominated the Indian seas during the sixteenth century, were the first European nation to establish political power in India. Flushed with victory against the Moors, they came to India as conquerors and crusaders. Zealous Catholics, they thought they had a mission to convert the people of the East by preaching, if they could, and by the sword if they had to. And under the Portuguese flag started a vigorous age of European missions. The pioneers were the Franciscans; the Augustinians, Capuchins and Jesuits, fired with the zeal of the Counter-Reformation, soon followed them.

Goa rose as the political and ecclesiastical capital of the Portuguese Empire in the East, and from here went missions not only to regions under Portuguese political influence but also to the interior : to the Great Moghul in Lahore and Agra, to the kingdom of Nepal, and to Tibet, the forbidden land of the Lamas. St. Francis Xavier was the greatest missionary of the age. He worked among the lowly fisherfolk of the coastal regions of India, and travelled to the Land of the Rising Sun to convert the Mikado. On his way to China, Xavier died on the island of Sancian. His body was brought to Goa where it remains intact to this day. St. Francis Xavier is venerated by Catholics as the Second Apostle of India.

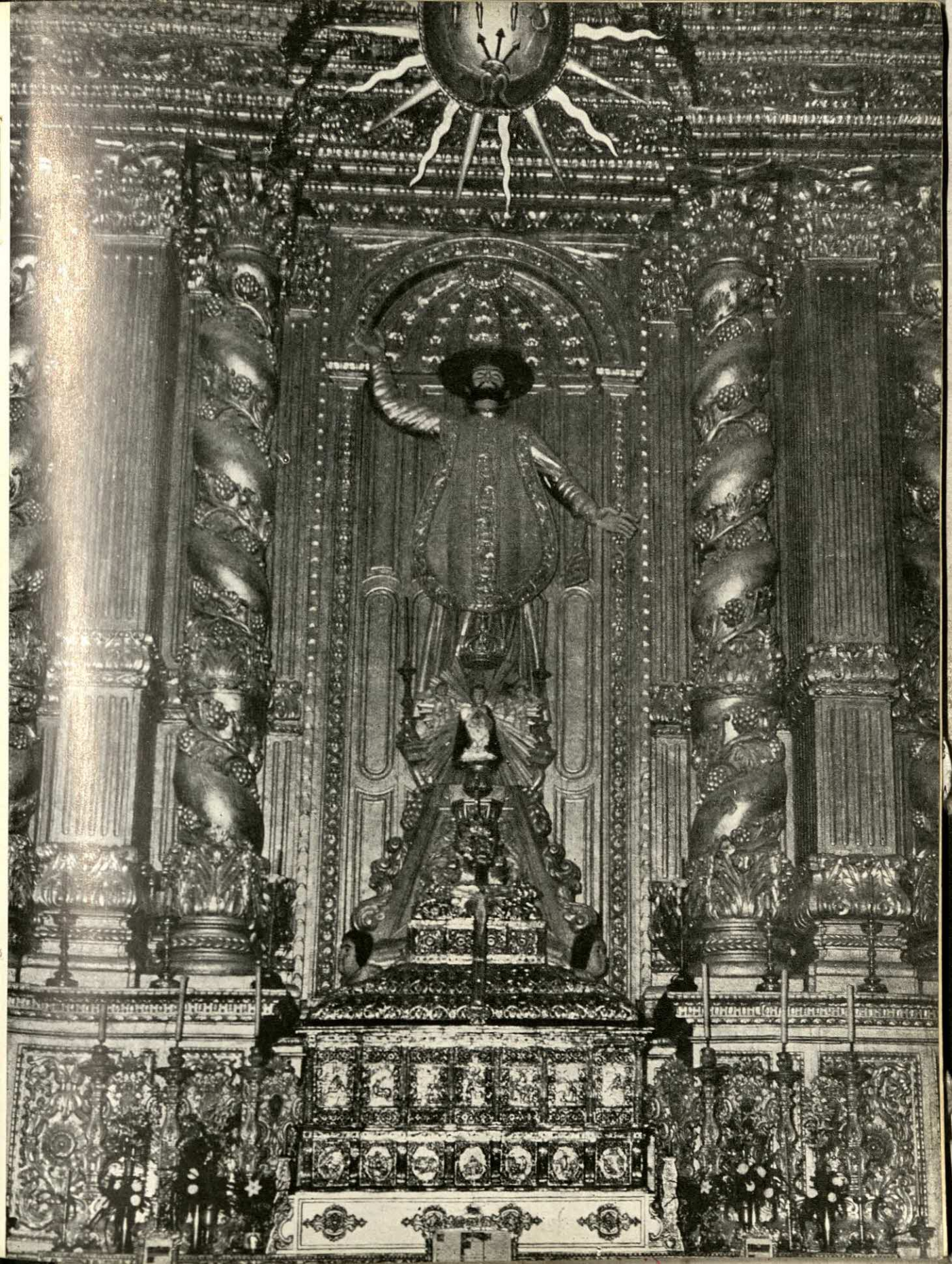
An interesting experiment in Indianising Christianity was made by the Italian Jesuit Roberto de Nobili who

* Neale, quoted by G. Milne Rae in *The Syrian Church in India.*

An ancient Church on the West Coast of India

Armenian Church at Madras

Casket in which the miraculously preserved body of St. Francis Xavier is kept at the Church of Bom Jesus, Old Goa



Basilica of Sardhana

founded the Madura Mission. Seeing that conversions by the Portuguese were confined to low castes, he studied Sanskrit and Tamil, dissociated himself from the Farangis (as the Portuguese were contemptuously called in India), wore a sacred thread, put on the robe of the Indian Sanyasin, practised vegetarianism and ablutions, appeared in the sacred city of Madura as a 'Roman Brahmin', and propounded a fifth Veda in which the tenets of Christianity were presented in a language familiar to the Hindus. He maintained that caste was a social convenience permissible to Christians too. His congregations of 'high caste Christians' considered the Portuguese and their converts low. The 'accommodation theory' of de Nobili led to a heated controversy in ecclesiastical circles in India and Portugal, but was finally upheld by the Pope. The Madura Mission flourished, but the congregation was all but destroyed in the devastating wars caused by the expansion of Mysore under Hyder and Tippu.

The Portuguese fell out with the Syrian Christians of Kerala. By virtue of the *Padroado**, the Portuguese claimed jurisdiction over Kerala Christians which the latter resented. The Portuguese resorted to coercion, starved the Kerala Church of Bishops from Western Asia by blockade of the high seas, and Archbishop Alexio de Menezies of Goa, in the heyday of the Portuguese power, brought the Syrians under Goa, in a Synod held at Diamper (Udayamperoor, near Cochin) in 1599. With the decay of the Portuguese power, the Syrians tried to renew their old link with Western Asia, and revolted (1653). And this event, known as the Revolt of Coonen Cross (the leaning cross of Mattanchery, near Cochin, by which the Syrians swore), put an end to the solidarity of the Syrian Church, as we shall see later.

The British Period

The 18th century was the age of European adventurers in India. In the chaotic conditions that followed the collapse of the Moghul Empire, not only European trading concerns but even individuals developed political ambition in India. An interesting adventurer of the period was Walter Reinhardt (nicknamed Sombre or Samru, because of his dour visage), a German who collected an army of mercenaries and, by judiciously selling his services to Indian potentates, carved out for himself the independent principality of Sardhana. On his death in 1788, his wife, a Muslim girl, took charge of his principality. She became a Christian and was called Begum Samru. Most of her army officers were Europeans and she held court at Sardhana in semi-occidental style. She is the only independent Indian Christian princess known to history, though there are legends of Christian kings in Kerala. After her death (1836), the Begum's kingdom merged into the expanding dominions of the East India Company.

The British East India Company was a purely commercial concern interested only in dividends, and its Directors thought it bad to mix religion and business. Besides, the proselytising zeal of the Portuguese was considered the cause of their downfall in India, and the British did not wish to make the same mistake.

* The *Padroado* was an agreement (1514) between the Pope and the king of Portugal by which prelates in regions under Portuguese influence in the East had to be jointly appointed, after mutual consultation.

STATE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
MANIPUR

So, in the early stages of their political expansion in India, the British were averse to missionary enterprise, and even seized European missionaries and deported them to where they came from, and pioneer Protestant missionaries like Ziegenbalg and William Carey had to establish their stations in the Danish settlements of Tranquebar and Serampore.

The attitude of the Nabobs (as the Englishmen in India were nicknamed at the time) led to considerable resentment in England, and in 1814, when the question of the renewal of the Charter of the Company came before the Parliament, the objectionable 'Missionary Clause'* was, after a heated debate deleted from the Charter. From then on, the age of the Reformed Churches started in India, and missions of various Protestant denominations came from Europe and America along with the Catholics. With the peace and stability established by the British, missions penetrated into the interior and into tribal regions, and by the end of the 19th century, Christians became an integral element in the diverse population of India.

In the 20th century, when the national struggle against foreign rule gained momentum, there was a corresponding feeling among Indian Christians for reform in hierarchical organisations. From early times, Indian Christians (even the powerful Kerala Christians) were ruled by foreign prelates, but from the beginning of the 20th century, there was a general change of attitude in all denominations in favour of Indian prelates. Due to the increase in the strength of congregations, the emphasis, among Protestants, shifted from missions to churches, several denominations became autonomous and a general movement for church union developed.

Christianity in India at Present

In 1947, when independence raised the position of India in the comity of nations, the prestige of Indian Christians also rose in Christendom. The *Padroado* was abolished in 1950, and all Portuguese interference in Indian churches ceased. Indian Catholics had their Cardinal (Valerian Gracias) in 1952, for the first time in their history. The Protestants established their first independent Indian Church (Church of South India) in September, 1947. But all this added importance brought in corresponding responsibilities for Indian Christians, and both missions and churches are now developing increasing reliance on their own resources rather than on foreign aid, especially in personnel.

At present Christians form the third community in India in numerical strength. According to the census of 1961, Indian Christians number 10,278,234, distributed as under :

Andhra Pradesh, 1,428,729; Assam, 764,553; Bihar, 502,195; Gujarat, 91,028; Jammu & Kashmir, 2,848; Kerala, 3,587,365; Madhya Pradesh, 188,314; Madras, 1,762,954; Maharashtra, 560,594; Mysore, 487,587; Orissa, 201,017; Punjab, 149,834; Rajasthan, 22,864; Uttar Pradesh, 101,641; West Bengal, 201,854; Delhi, 29,269 and Nagaland, 195,588.

*There was a clause in the Charter which gave the executives of the Company in India power to prevent the landing of, and even to deport, Europeans who were considered undesirable by them. As it was mainly used against the missionaries, the clause came to be known as the "Missionary Clause".

Chapter II

THE CHURCH AS A CENTRE OF RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL LIFE

IN early Christian literature the word 'church' meant an assembly and not a building. We must remember that Christianity was a persecuted religion in the Roman Empire, and Primitive Christians usually met in secret at any convenient place for worship or consultation. Public worship and regular buildings for the purpose became safe for Christians in the Roman world only after the conversion of Emperor Constantine in the 4th century A.D. However, in several countries in the East that lay outside the Roman Empire, Christians had enjoyed freedom of public worship and had built churches from the very beginning of the Christian era.

The need for building churches arose mainly out of the religious obligation for Christians to keep the Sabbath. The Jews, as is well known, have their Sabbath on Saturday, and in early Christendom there was some dispute about observing the Sabbath, Christians of Jewish extraction favouring the practices followed by Jews and others objecting to it. Finally, a compromise was arrived at, and Sunday was fixed as the Christian Sabbath; as a departure from the Jewish tradition of observing it as a day of weekly rest in memory of Jehovah's abstention from the work of creation after six days, Christians decided upon the weekly celebration of Christ's Resurrection on Sunday with the attendant obligation of public worship. One Christian denomination, the Seventh Day Adventists, however, observe, like the Jews, Saturday as the Sabbath.

So, it was for public worship on the Sabbath that churches first began to be built. The nature of worship and service in churches, at present, varies from the imposing Solemn High Mass celebration of the Catholics to the quiet reading of passages from the New Testament or singing hymns, as in the case of certain Protestant congregations, but weekly community worship in churches is obligatory on practically all Christian denominations.

Non-Christians, unfamiliar with Christian worship, may not know exactly what is worshipped in a church. They may find, especially in Catholic churches, a large number of crucifixes and images of saints, some occupying even central positions on altars. But none of these is worshipped though all are venerated. The object of worship in most churches belonging to denominations that believe in Holy Communion, is the Eucharist or Host, wherein Christ really lives under appearances of bread and wine. The service in such churches is the ritual commemorating the Last Supper. At this ritual the priest pronounces the very words of Christ in order to transubstantiate bread and wine into the person of Christ. Among Catholics, the ritual is

known as Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and among Eastern Rites in Kerala as Kurbana or sacrifice. It is the Eucharist or Host that is received by the faithful in Holy Communion (physical and spiritual communion between the devotee and Christ).

The Eucharist is usually preserved in a golden chalice or cup in the sanctum on the altar but it is not necessary for the Eucharist to be present in the church always. In small churches, when the resident priest has to be absent or when it is considered, for any reason, desirable to remove the Eucharist, priests can take the whole of the Host in Holy Communion and leave the church without the Host.

Since 1881 the Catholics, it may be mentioned, have been holding periodical Eucharistic celebrations on an international scale in different countries to which delegates and pilgrims come from all over the world. These assemblies are known as International Eucharistic Congresses.

Religious Life in Indian Churches

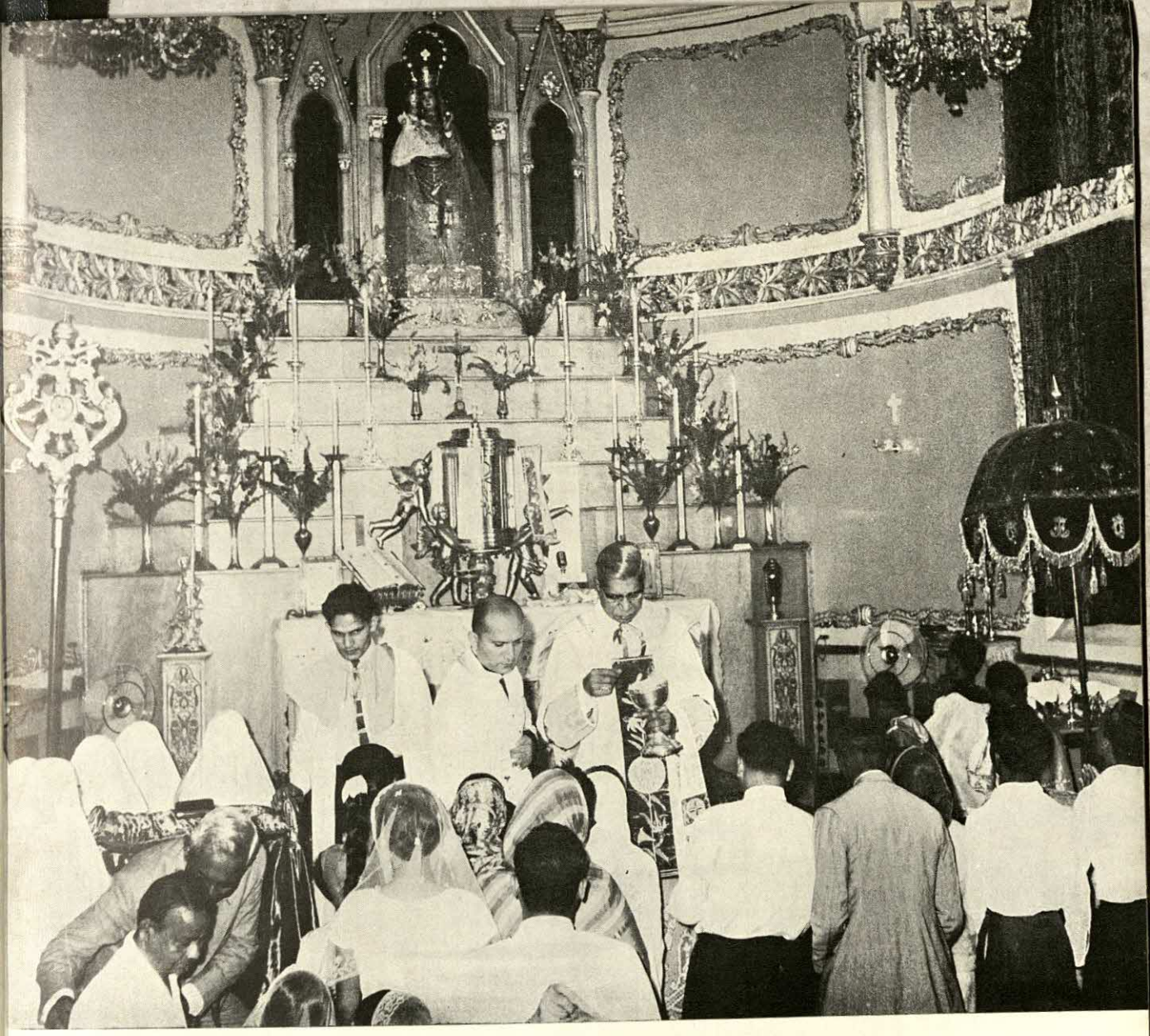
We have seen that there were Christian communities in India from very early times, and ancient Indian Christians, unlike their brethren in the Roman Empire, had enjoyed not only freedom of worship but even the patronage of liberal Hindu kings. We know little about these early Indian Christians, but traditions would indicate that, with their Hindu background and environments, their church-life developed on the pattern of Indian temple-life. The community must have lived together as a caste, in villages or towns, as is the immemorial custom in India, and the church probably stood in a central place with the main streets around or near about. Apart from the convenience for attending church, Christians considered it spiritually elevating to live near their churches; besides, periodical church processions had their clearly demarcated routes which priests used to bless, and good Christians, very naturally, wished to live in streets so hallowed. This preference for living near churches has continued in Kerala, through the Syrian and Portuguese periods, down to the present day.

The Decrees of the Synod of Diamper (referred to earlier) throw interesting light on the church-life of Syrian Christians before the Portuguese period. One of the Decrees prohibits the practice of bringing the sick to the churches. It would appear that Syrian Christians considered it good for their souls to die within the sacred walls of the church, and brought the sick into their churches, when hopes of recovery were lost, either to die or get cured by miracles.

Another Decree prohibits the use of churches as inns or Dharamsalas by pilgrims. In those days, pilgrims who travelled together in strength to distant shrines, found the village churches convenient halting places for the night, as no houses could accommodate them; besides, church and pilgrimage were inextricably linked together.

Apart from the need for public worship on the Sabbath, the church is a place of daily worship too for many Christians. The pious attend the church as often as they can, for prayer and meditation.

The church is also linked, the world over, with the three main events in a Christian's life : baptism, marriage and death. All Christians, except members of certain denominations like the



His Eminence Valerian Cardinal Gracias giving Holy Communion at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Mount, Bandra, Bombay.

Date 27.9.2007
Acc. No. 12612

2112

N.C.E.R.T. Library 18/1, S.C. Road

Procession during Holy Week on the West Coast

Baptists who practise adult baptism ("believer's baptism", to be precise), are baptised a few days after birth. Baptism is generally done in a church by sprinkling of water and the repetition of certain formulae, and every church has a baptistry for the purpose, with a font for the flow of water.

Marriage is a sacrament for Christians, and all devout Christians wish to be married in churches and to have the union blessed according to prescribed rites.

The third and final event in a man's life, death, has peculiar associations with the church. The Syrians, as we have seen, loved to die within their churches. This is not now permitted, but all the baptised are buried in the hallowed ground of cemeteries. Except in towns and cities where the exigencies of space do not always permit of it, cemeteries are attached to churches. Among most denominations, the dead body is brought to the church, obsequies are performed and the body is then removed to a cemetery and laid to rest. Important individuals are buried within the churches, and monuments or tomb-stones are erected. Burial, it would appear, has been practised by Indian Christians throughout their history, and it was an important departure from Hindu practices to which ancient Kerala Christians had been partial.

The Church and Cultural Life

The church is generally the largest and best building of the community, and for many denominations of Christians it is the visible symbol of their spiritual life. Ecclesiastics, on their part, have taken pains to cultivate devotion through art and music, and the building and the interior decorations of the church are designed to inspire awe and a sense of the majesty and greatness of God. The church service has developed religious music too, and for Catholics, the world over, the Gregorian chant is still the basis of all church music.

Perhaps the most popular functions in Indian churches, as in Hindu temples, are the feasts and festivals. The church, during a festival, goes gay with festoons, pendents and balloons. In Syrian churches, right down to the 20th century, music used to start several days in advance, and processions with parasols, trumpets and elephants were taken through the main streets; in several parts of Kerala many features of these ancient pageants have survived to this day.

In villages the festival in the parish church is also the shopping season for the women folk. Women seldom get a chance to go out of their villages for shopping, and during a festival the church and the surrounding area assume the appearance of a fair, as temporary stalls are opened by merchants for sale of articles of daily use, fancy goods and the toys and trinkets women and children love. Every housewife lays by what she can spare and eagerly looks forward to the coming of the church festival.

Apart from local feasts and festivals, there are the grand festivals of Easter and Christmas. For Christmas, the gayest day in Christendom, the church too goes gay. Catholics celebrate Midnight Mass on a grand scale, the churches are brilliantly illuminated, and cribs of hay and grass are built with the child Jesus lying in swaddling clothes, wondering shepherds and placid sheep looking on, angels

flitting across a star-studded sky and the Three Wise Men on their mounts looming in the horizon with gifts for the wonder babe.

Popular gaiety is always infectious and other communities too often take part in these celebrations in a friendly spirit.

Christianity, however, is not all gaiety. There is, for instance, Good Friday, the day He was crucified, the saddest day in Christendom, and the church too puts on the mourning garb. The altars are shrouded in black, bells remain silent, and in Catholic churches, the image of the dead Christ is borne round by silent mourners in black and laid to rest. Passion Plays are also performed during the Easter Season commemorating the crucifixion and the triumph of Christ in Resurrection.

The Church and Social Life

Though church-going is essentially a religious obligation, it has its social side too. God, it is true, makes no difference between rags and robes, but men do. So everyone takes care to attend church service in his or her best clothes. Some people even take pride in parading their finery on Sundays. A 17th-century European traveller tells us that the Syrians went to church fully armed. "When they entered the church, they deposited all their arms in the porch, which then presented the appearance of a guard-house. And after Divine Service every man would take up his weapon again, without the least confusion and walk quietly home."*

With the change in times the yardstick of social importance of congregations too changed. In a progress report (of 1769) on Christianity among the English settlers of Calcutta, for instance, we read: "The courtyard (of St. John's Church) adjoining the streets are now regularly thronged with palanquins and equipages of the congregation, where before scarcely half a dozen had usually appeared."**

There is also a certain amount of social prestige attached to membership in Church Councils, meant for the general management of the affairs of the church. Among Syrians, membership in the Church Council was a coveted honour which generally went by heredity; but there was scope for new members by nomination by the existing councils, subject to approval by ecclesiastical authorities, and this was a fruitful source of quarrel between the newly rich who aspired for social importance and the conservative elements.

For women, too, church-going has a social side. Indian women, especially in villages and small towns, have little social life, and after the Sunday service, friends and relatives meet and exchange views. These unofficial social functions usually take place in the porch of the church and the ladies discuss all those affairs dear to women, from the problem of servants to the latest in fashions. Women too, like men, have their Sunday finery. Fashions in clothes do not, however, change in India so often or suddenly as in Europe and America, but those in ornaments do; the newly-weds usually set the fashion in jewellery, and every bride takes particular care to go to church gorgeously ornamented.

Anthropology of Syrian Christians, L. K. Anantakrishna Ayyar.
** *Hundred and Seventy Five Years at the Old Church*, edited by G. F. Westcott.

Civic Functions of Churches

Every Parish church has a resident priest and a sexton, and the bigger Parishes have clerks and assistant priests in addition. One of the most important duties of the church-staff is the maintenance of the Parish Register in which the dates of baptism, marriage and death of every parishioner are kept. Before the development of civil bodies like the Panchayats and Municipalities, the Parish Register was the only reliable guide in these matters as far as Christians were concerned.

Perhaps the most important civil function of the church has been in promoting the cause of education. Children are taught the fundamentals of their religion and the daily prayers in regular Sunday classes, usually held after the service for better attendance. For the efficient instruction of children it is necessary that they should know the art of reading and writing, and every Parish church has a primary school run for the purpose. It must be remembered that in India, till the modern period, primary education was not considered the responsibility of the state, but rather a matter of choice for individuals, and the Christian communities had an efficient system of primary education which ensured the knowledge of the Three R's to practically every child in the Parish.

At present Christians in India form one of the leading communities in literacy, and a great many schools and colleges all over the country are owned and run by them; this peculiarly favoured position of the community is in no small measure due to the experience gained out of the humble church schools and Sunday classes.

CHAPTER III

CHURCH ART AND ARCHITECTURE

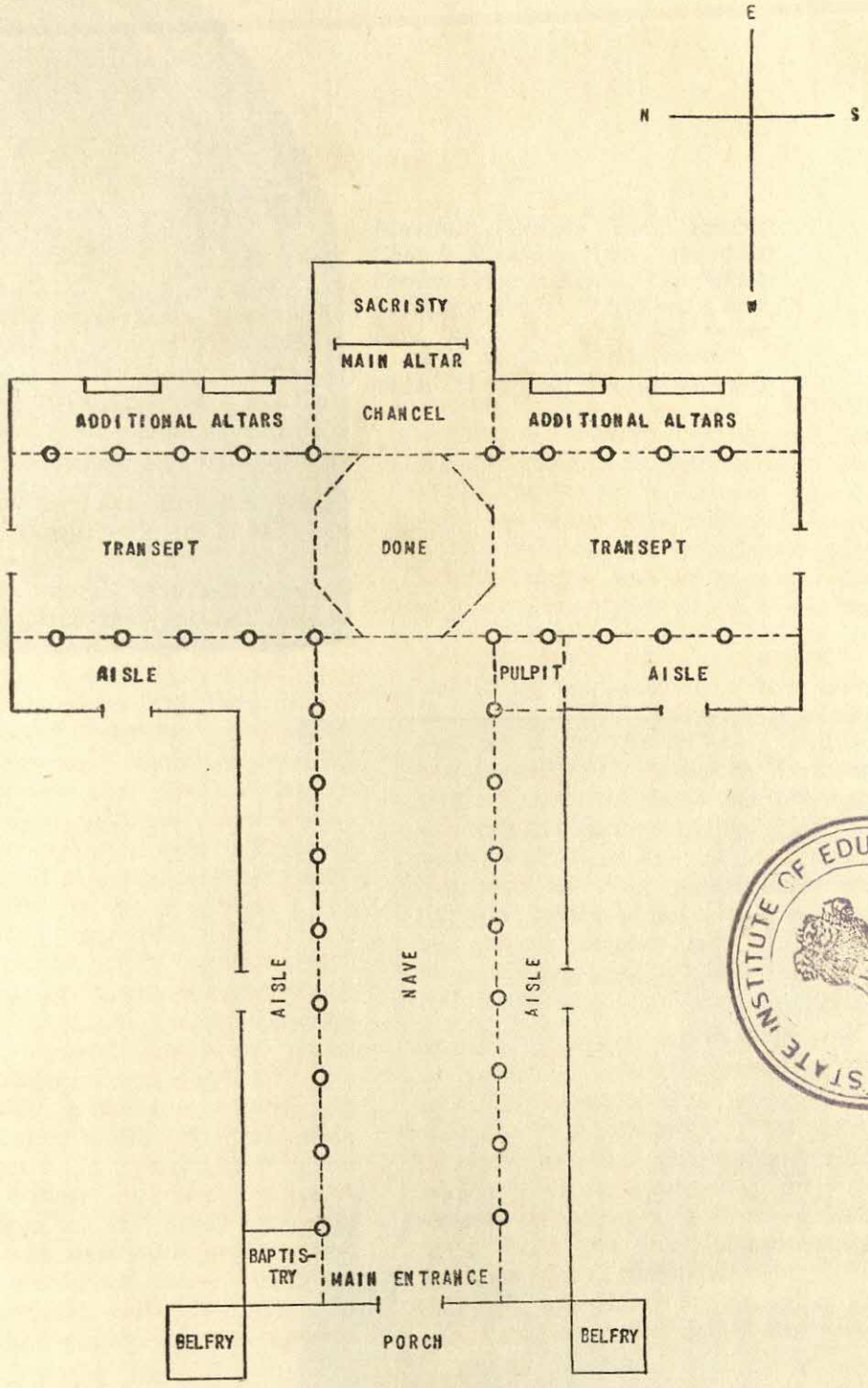
THOUGH there were some ancient congregations in the East which had enjoyed freedom from persecution, Christianity emerged as a world religion only after the conversion of Constantine, and the great age of European church building started at his capital, Byzantium. Byzantine architecture was, however, considerably influenced by Syria which was, at the time, a great cultural centre.

Christianity, it must be remembered, owes much to Judaism, and the Hebrew temple of Jerusalem, which Jesus had attended, was sacred both to the Jews and early Christians. The Romans had destroyed the temple soon after the time of Christ, but the Apostles and their disciples knew, as well as the Jews, what the temple looked like. Its main divisions were the Holy of Holies, in which the Ark of the Covenant was kept, an altar for burnt offerings, and a nave or body.

The church was designed after the temple, with the chancel containing the sanctum on an altar for the officiating priest and his assistants (from which the laity were generally excluded), and the nave for the congregation. East or West, these are the basic conventional divisions of the church, and only details differ. There were Greek and Roman influences in early church construction but they were mainly confined to architecture.

The church usually faced West, so that the priest could perform the ritual facing East (the congregation too, obviously, faced East), the point of the rising sun, traditionally considered auspicious by mankind from time immemorial.

Early European churches were generally built in the basilican style. With the rise of Islam and its expansion towards south-eastern Europe and Iberia, western and northern Europe became the main strong-holds of Christianity. Here, builders, in the beginning, copied Roman styles, but the results were not always happy; the style is now known as Romanesque. Soon, however, they evolved the Gothic style, with its general upward trend, admirably suited for expressing the religious aspirations of man. During the Renaissance in Europe, there was a reaction in favour of classical styles. Later, Baroque architecture sought freedom from conventions, and even indulged in eccentricity; the Iberian peninsula, with its admixture of Muslim culture, particularly favoured the new style. The Portuguese introduced Gothic and Baroque architecture into India, while, during the British period, colonial forms of practically all European and American styles in church building came into vogue in the country, and purely Indian styles were also adopted. No style, however, completely superseded others, and Indian churches, like the complex cultural pattern of the sub-

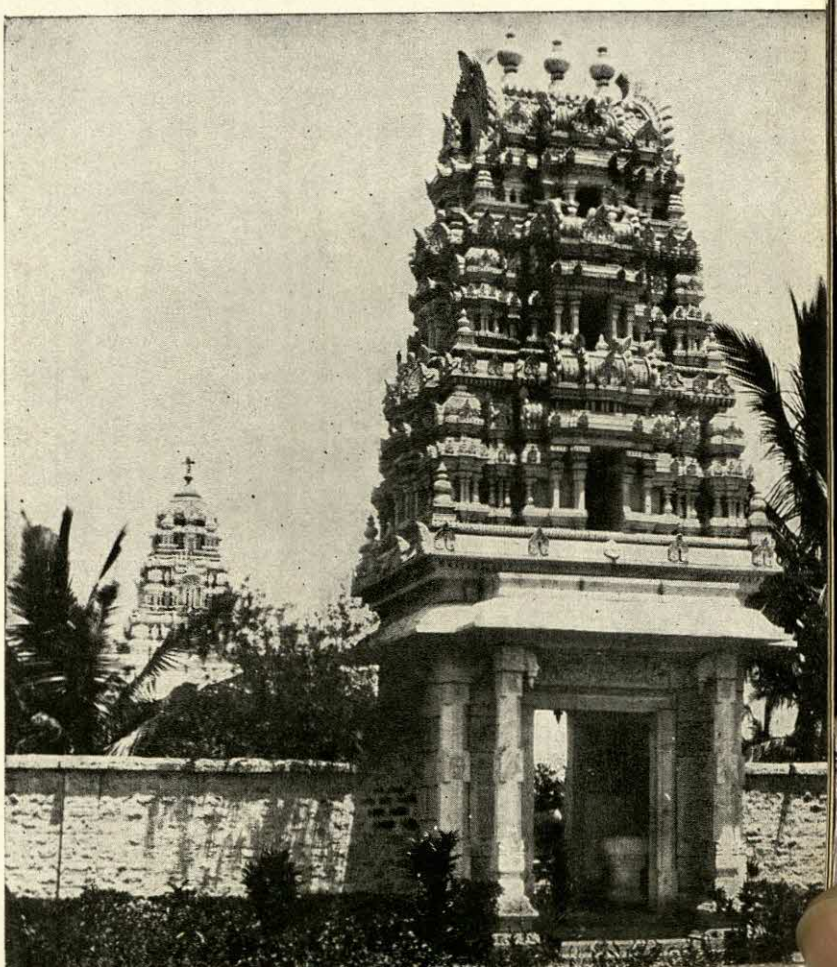


STATE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION ★ BANIPUR ★

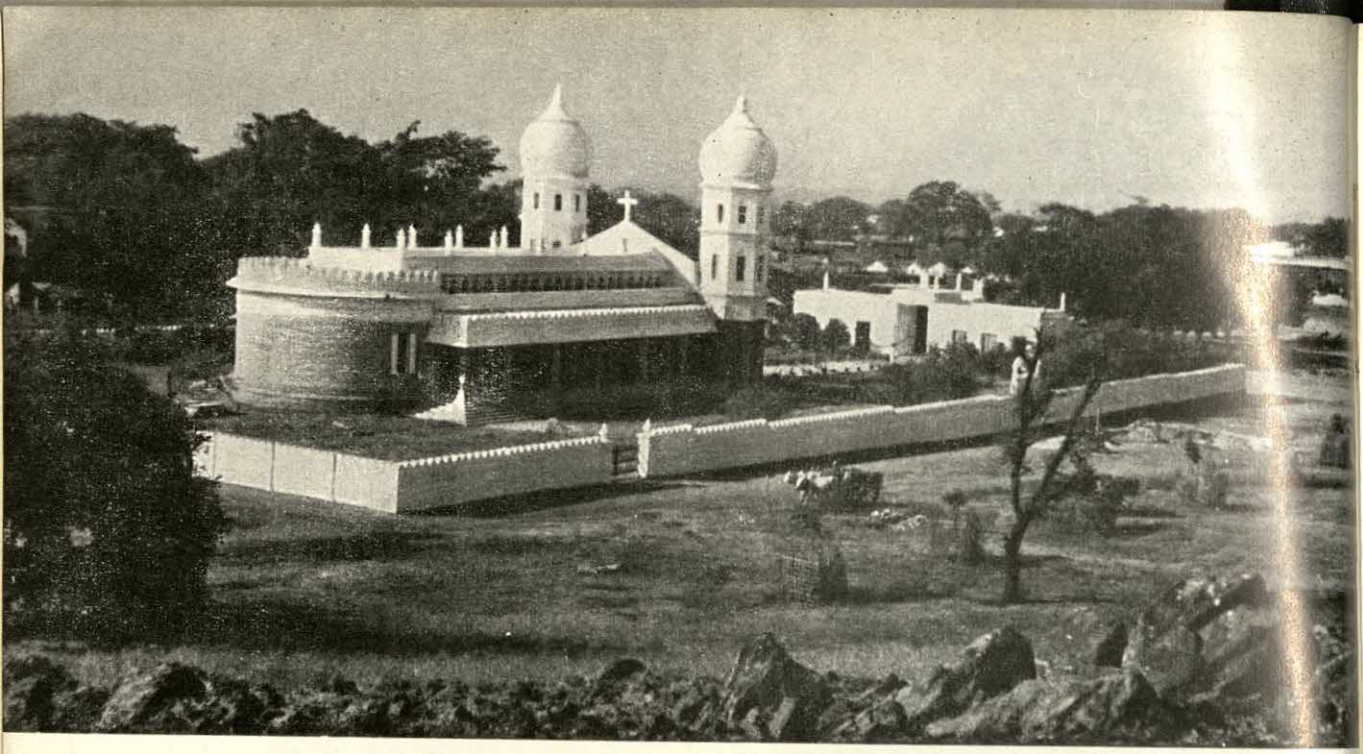
GROUND PLAN OF A CROSS-SHAPED CHURCH

Inscribed Persian Cross, Jacobite Church, Kottayam. This is the oldest Persian Cross in Kerala. The Pahlavi inscription reads : "My Lord Christ, have mercy on Afras, the Syrian, who sculptured this cross."

[Photo : M. K. John, *Malayala Manorama*]



Christian Chapel at Christu Kula Ashram, Hirupattur

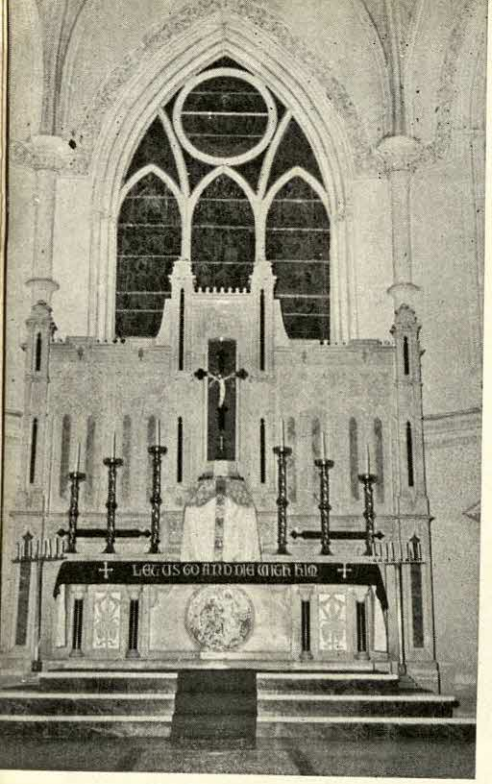


Dornakal Cathedral, Church of South India

The Anglican Cathedral, Shillong

The Mother of Divine Grace, Mokameh, Bihar

13th-Century wall paintings at the Orthodox Syrian Church, Cheppad



Stained glass windows and main Altar, St. Thomas Cathedral Basilica, Mylapore, Madras

Adoration of the Magi, Mural at Mt. Mary, Bombay

continent, show a variety in style and taste seldom found in other countries.

Early Indian Churches

Kerala Christians believe that the Apostle Thomas had seven churches built in Kerala; at Cranganore, Chayil, Palur, Parur, Quilon, Niranam and Kokkamangalam. None of these churches is now extant. This is not surprising; for no building in Kerala belonging to the first century, or earlier periods, whether religious or secular, has come down to us, not even the ruins of the famous Musiris. The reason for this is not far to seek. Buildings in ancient Kerala were generally of wood and thatch, and the severity of the monsoon and the ravages of white ants had given such buildings a very short span of life. It is, however, interesting to note that the present Palur church has preserved the Abhisheka Patra and certain Shaiva symbols, carved in stone, as the relics of the original church which is said to have been a Hindu shrine adapted for Christian worship.

The primitive Christian communities of Kerala lived in practical isolation from the main centres of Christianity, and they were not fully aware of the church-building conventions that rose in the West. Hence it is probable that their churches were either Hindu temples converted for Christian worship or buildings constructed like Hindu temples. The workmen, it must be remembered, were all Hindus, who had definite ideas of how a place of worship was to be built; besides, the community itself had a Hindu background, and Hindu temples were naturally their models for church building.

The Syrians who migrated to Kerala (see Chapter I) brought with them Western Asian conventions in church architecture. Churches with regular chancel and nave began to be built, the Syrian Liturgy and ritual were adopted, and soon Kerala evolved a distinctive style of church architecture. The peculiar feature of this style was the ornamented gable facade at the nave, whitened with lime, and surmounted by a cross. A porch or hall, called Shala, in front was another common feature of Kerala churches of the time; the Shala was generally meant for the accommodation of additional worshippers during festivals when pilgrims or the faithful from other parishes attended the church.

The roof of the nave was higher than that of the Shala but, unlike in European churches, lower than that of the chancel. The chancel, the most sacred part of the church, had the highest roof. The chancel was usually railed off from the nave.

The nave was broader than the chancel or the Shala. It was divided into two equal parts by railings, the portion adjoining the chancel being for men, and the other for women. Syrian churches had no pews or benches. The congregation generally knelt or squatted, when necessary. These practices are even now followed in most Indian churches not affected by European influences.

The sacristy (or vestry, where sacred vestments are kept; the priest puts on ceremonial robes here, and enters the chancel direct) was usually a small annexe at the side of the chancel, and the baptistry a chamber inside the nave near the entrance. Churches that could afford it, had separate belfries built on one side of the nave, but in smaller churches the bell was hung, at a convenient height, in an opening in the nave gable or in the chancel wall.

Interior decoration was generally confined to inscribed or ornamented Persian crosses; some of the Syrian churches still have these crosses with Pahlavi inscriptions and angel figures. There were no regular images of saints. In fact one of the Decrees of the Synod of Diamper (see Chapter I) deplores the mean appearance of the interior of Syrian churches and stresses the need for beautifying the church with images and paintings.

The residence of the priest was a separate building, on one side, and the cemetery on the other side of the church. The Parish hall, where church councils met, and the treasury, were built at any convenient place, usually on the side where the priest had his residence.

In externals, Syrian churches retained some of the indigenous features of Hindu temple styles. The church and compound were enclosed in a massive granite or laterite wall. Over the main gateway was the Kottupura or musical hall where musicians performed on festal occasions. In ancient Kerala, it may be mentioned, the soaring Gopurams of Dravidian temple architecture did not find favour, mainly due to the severity of the monsoon, but over the gateway was constructed a Kottupura or music hall in wood and thatch, which the Syrians too adopted for the church. Later on, when tiles began to be manufactured, these replaced thatch. Some of the churches in Kerala still have the Kottupura, but the modern tendency is to dismantle them and provide regular gates with no structure above.

Another interesting adaptation from Hindu style was the open air cross in front of the main entrance. In Hindu temples in Kerala, outside the main gate stood a huge brass or granite lamp, built on a basement with wick-holders all around. The Christians built open air crosses on granite basements, with provision for wicks and oil for illumination, and some of these ancient crosses can still be seen in front of the main gates of Kerala churches.

European Styles in Indian Church Building

The Portuguese were the first to introduce European architectural styles in church building in India. With their clear cut ideas of how churches should look like, they were greatly distressed to find that churches in Kerala looked like Hindu temples, and they had some of them demolished when they took over the Kerala Church.

The first European church in India was built by the Franciscans in Cochin in 1510 when the Portuguese Admiral Affonso de Albuquerque constructed a factory here. This church has come down to us practically intact. It is a small, unpretentious building of the medieval Spanish type, as Europeans at Cochin were few at the time and Indian proselytes to the Latin rite even fewer. This little church has suffered the vicissitudes of European colonial struggle in India. When Vasco Da Gama died in Cochin, in 1524, his body was interred in this church. When his remains were removed to Lisbon in 1538, the grave-stone was left behind, on which account, the church came to be known as Vasco Da Gama's Church. When the Protestant Dutch captured Cochin, they seized the church too and used it for Reformed Service. Later, the British occupied Cochin, when the church became Anglican. With the union of Protestant deno-

minations in the South, old Vasco Da Gama's Church was taken over by the Church of South India, to which denomination it now belongs.

After the Portuguese power was well established in India and their Indian congregations became bigger, important churches were built throughout the regions where Portuguese influence was dominant. The greatest churches of the Portuguese in India were built in Goa, the capital of their eastern dominions and one of the richest cities of the East at the time. But with the commercial and political decay of Goa, these huge monuments fell into neglect, and can now be seen in Old Goa in various stages of dilapidation.

The Portuguese introduced many innovations in the Syrian churches when they took over the Kerala church (see Chapter I). The churches and altar pieces were ornamented, stained glass windows were installed in churches that could afford them, images of saints were made to adorn niches, ceilings and walls were painted with religious themes and pulpits were erected. The paintings were generally in the style of European masters, whom Indian artists studied. Images were usually made of wood and painted, since granite, because of its dark colour and associations with Hindu art, did not find favour with the Portuguese, and marble was costly.

Among the Protestant denominations, the Anglicans with their well-established hierarchical system followed the great European traditions in church building, and theirs are usually the bigger and more ornate of the Protestant churches. During the British period many Anglican Cathedrals were built in India, of which St. Paul's, the Cathedral of the Metropolitan See of Calcutta, as we shall see in the next chapter, is the most important. Other denominations among the Protestants usually believe in simpler but more numerous churches; some very strict sects, like the Quakers, object to church-building as contrary to Christian principles.

Of church architectural designs introduced into India during the European period, the cross-shaped plan became increasingly popular, especially in places where large congregations had to be accommodated. Apart from the obvious symbolism of the cross, the plan is more suited for better visibility of the altar from all points in the church. There is also sufficient space at the transepts for additional altars, in case of need, for holding services simultaneously by several priests, on important occasions like Christmas. There are aisles at the nave and, in the bigger churches, even at the transepts. In places where separation of sexes prevails, the transept is used by men and the nave by women. In the cross-shaped plan, the vestry is generally behind the altar at the apse with a door at either side leading to the chancel.

A dome at the centre of the transept rises over the roof, and at the entrance, on each side or over, is a tower which serves as belfry.

Modern Trends

Early Europeans, as we have seen, were hostile to Indian styles in art and architecture, particularly in church building. During the British period, especially by the beginning of the 20th century, there was a marked reaction to this attitude, in favour of Indian art and architecture. The progress of Indology,

appreciation of Indian ideals of art in the West, and the rise of nationalism in India were mainly responsible for this change of attitude. Increasing interest in Indian styles began to be evinced not only by Indians but by foreign missionaries as well. The modern Dornakal Cathedral of the Church of South India, in Andhra Pradesh and the Christu Kula Ashram Chapel at Tirupattur in North Arcot, Madras State, are remarkable for the new trend in Church-building.

In Indian Christian religious art too, the modern tendency is to adopt Indian styles rather than follow the European schools introduced during the Portuguese and continued through the British period. Quite a number of Indian painters have taken up Christian religious themes and we often come across pictures of Christ in the style of the Ajantan Bodhisatva, of the Virgin Mary emerging from the lotus, and in other familiar styles of Indian religious art. Some of these artists have done remarkably well in the mural decorations of Indian churches. All these attempts are, however, in an experimental stage, and a distinct style of painting, which may be called Indian Christian, is yet to be evolved.

St. Thomas Cathedral Basilica, Mylapore, Madras

Church of Bom Jesus, Old Goa

Interior of the Church, Sardhana

Shrine of Our Lady of Health, Vailankanni, Tanjore

St. Mary's Basilica, Mt. Mary, Bandra, Bombay

Shrine of the Mother of Divine Grace, Mokameh, Bihar

Sacred Heart Cathedral, New Delhi

Monument at Azhikode (site of ancient Musiris) to commemorate the landing of St. Thomas at the port

Orthodox Syrian Church, Cheppad

13th-Century Jacobite Church, Chengannur, Kerala
(Photo : M. K. John, *Malayala Manorama*)

Cathedral of the Church of the East (Nestorian), Trichur
[Photo : Metro Studio, Trichur]

Cathedral in Pondicherry

CHAPTER IV

SOME IMPORTANT CHURCHES

CHRISTIANS have always been a minority community in India and, compared with the Hindus and Muslims, they are not very wealthy. Hence there are no churches of the magnificence of the wonderful Hindu and Muslim edifices of India, or of the great Cathedrals of Europe and America, on which the wealth and building-skill of empires and nations have been lavished. Yet there are famous shrines and churches of historic and religious importance in India, and variety more than compensates for lack of grandeur.

The hierarchical denominations, as we have seen, are more important to our subject, and their Cathedrals* enjoy a certain prestige from the ecclesiastical point of view, and are usually the bigger and better churches. But the Cathedral is not necessarily the largest and best church in a diocese, just as the capital of a country is not always its largest or best city.

Though church-building has followed certain established conventions throughout Christendom, there are several denominational peculiarities that lend considerable variety to churches. While the Catholics, for instance, build ornate churches and have images for interior decorations, most of the Protestant denominations object to images and insist on simplicity in design and details.

In the following description of important Indian churches, the classification has been based, for convenience, on denominations. The basis, however, is present possession. The vicissitudes of history have affected the ownership of churches in India, and the fact of current possession does not indicate that the particular church has always remained with the denomination now in possession of it. Practically all churches in Kerala, for instance, were Catholic when Archbishop Menezies brought Kerala Christians under Goa in 1599, but after the revolt of Coonen Cross (see Chapter I) the churches in Kerala were divided among several denominations. Again, during European colonial expansion in India, Protestants who seized Catholic settlements often appropriated the churches too. Vasco Da Gama's church in Cochin, as we have seen, has changed hands many times. Similar transfer of ownership of churches took place in several other regions in India when the British expansion began.

CATHOLIC CHURCHES

The Catholics have taken particular care to cultivate church-life. Their hierarchical organisations, ceremonials like

* From Cathedra, the throne of the Bishop, kept in the church.

the High Mass assisted by more than one priest in brilliant vestments to the accompaniment of music by choir and organ, the architecture and size of churches, illuminations, decorations and processions on festal occasions, all add a grandeur to worship seldom found in other denominations.

A popular element in Catholic worship is the spirit of pilgrimage well fostered by the clergy. Some of the important shrines of the Catholics are visited by thousands of pilgrims from far and near during the feasts of saints.

The exalted position which the Virgin Mary occupies in the hagiology is, again, of immense popular appeal in Catholic worship. Her shrines in many places in India attract not only Catholics but members of other communities too.

More than half the Christians of India are computed to be Catholics. They fall into two main categories: those who follow the Latin Rite, and the Syrian Catholics. The official Liturgy of the Catholic Church, with the Pope as the supreme head, is Latin, but Rome has always recognised the validity of certain eastern rites, and the Syrians, when they were brought under Goa, were allowed to retain their ancient Liturgy. After the Revolt of Coonen Cross, those Syrians who were reconciled to Rome continued to follow the Syrian Liturgy and they are known as Syrian Catholics. Syrian clergymen are now permitted to say Mass in Malayalam, the language of Kerala.

The Catholics in India have 72 Prefectures, Dioceses and Archdioceses all over India, with a Cathedral in each. Mention of the names of all these would make the list unduly long, though all are important. The Archdioceses and their Cathedrals are : Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Agra; St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral, Bangalore; Cathedral of the Holy Name, Bombay; Cathedral of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary, Calcutta; Sacred Heart Cathedral, New Delhi; Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ernakulam (Syrian); Cathedral of St. Catherine, Goa; St. Joseph's Cathedral, Hyderabad (Deccan); San Thome Cathedral, Madras; Cathedral of Our Lady of Dolours, Madurai; St. Francis de Sales Cathedral, Nagpur; Notre Dame de Anges, Pondicherry; the Catholic Cathedral, Ranchi; St. Mary's Cathedral (Syrian), Trivandrum; and St. Francis Assissi Cathedral (Latin Archdiocese of Verapoly), Ernakulam.

Shrines Sacred to the Apostle Thomas

The most important and historic Christian shrine in India is St. Thomas Mount, Mylapore, Madras, the traditional site of the death of the Apostle Thomas. There are references to the Mount, and churches and monasteries at the site, in the writings of the early doctors of the Church dating back to the 4th century of the Christian era. The site was an important centre of pilgrimage for Christians from not only India but abroad too. The fame of this shrine had spread to Europe early, and in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* we read that Alfred the Great had sent, in the year 883, Shiglem, Bishop of Shireburn, with alms to the shrine. Practically all early travellers to South India have written about the shrine; Marco Polo, who visited the site in the 13th century, has left us an account of the shrine as he found it.

The place seems to have been a stronghold of Christians in ancient times, with magnificent churches and monasteries,

but during the disturbed political conditions of the middle ages both the Christian community and the shrines suffered much. When the Portuguese took over the site in the sixteenth century, they found no churches here but only ruins. Among the ruins, however, they discovered the tomb of the Apostle. The relics were exhumed, and some of them are now housed in the present San Thome Cathedral, Mylapore.

At present there are two churches, built during the Portuguese period, at the Mount, one on the Little Mount, where the Apostle used to repair for prayer and solitude during his stay there, and the other at the actual site of his death. An annual feast of the Mount is held on the 18th December, for which pilgrims come to the shrine from all over South India.

Another important shrine of St. Thomas, though less historic, is Mount Malayattoor in the Western Ghats in Central Kerala. Legends would indicate that the Apostle Thomas used to retreat to this wild spot, in the thick of the forest, and years after his death a party of hunters discovered the site with a cross and a perennial spring. A chapel was built on the Mount and it became a centre of pilgrimage in South India. The original chapel, and many rebuilt later, were destroyed by wild elephants as the place stood deserted in the forest except for a week in the season of pilgrimage. At present, the Mount is free from wild animals, and every Sunday Mass is said by a priest from the nearby Parish. An annual feast is held at the shrine, first Sunday after Easter, to which pilgrims come from all over Kerala and from the Tamil area. Among Syrian Catholics it is customary for newly-weds to go on pilgrimage to the shrine for the first feast after their wedding, for married happiness.

Bom Jesus (Infant Jesus) Church

The body of St. Francis Xavier, which has remained intact to this day, is kept in this famous church in Old Goa. The church had several patrons in India and abroad, and important personages endowed the Church and contributed substantial sums for its interior decoration. The Duke of Tuscany, for instance, donated four beautiful bronze panels depicting scenes from the life of the saint; and an Italian lady, Fransesca de Sopranis; donated a very costly silver statue of the saint. The casket containing the body of the saint is an exquisite piece of art; it was studded with precious stones, which, later, were removed to Lisbon.

The periodical exposition of the body of the saint is an important international event for Catholics, and pilgrims visit the shrine at that time from different parts of the world.

Begum Samru's Church

St. Mary's Church, Sardhana, is known as Begum Samru's Church as it was built (1822) by Begum Samru. The architect was Antonio Reghelini of Padua, Major in the Begum's army, and the style is a combination of several schools. The Pope, at the request of the Begum, erected the See of Sardhana, and the Church became the Cathedral of Mgr. Julius Caesar. He was the domestic chaplain of the Begum, and was consecrated Vicar Apostolic in 1834. In 1836 the Begum died, and the See of Sardhana merged with Agra.

The church has a beautiful marble monument to the Begum executed by the Italian sculptor, Adamo Tadolini of Bologna, a disciple of Canova.

Important Shrines of the Virgin Mary

There are many famous shrines of the Virgin Mary in India and they attract a large number of pilgrims during the festivals of the Virgin.

The Church of Our Lady of Health, at Vailankanni (Tanjore District) is known as the Lourdes of South India because of the many miraculous cures attributed to the shrine. Not only Christians but Hindus and Muslims too frequent the shrine with alms for favours received.

Another interesting shrine of the Virgin is at Bandra (St. Mary's Basilica, Mount Mary) near Bombay, and the Feast of the Virgin, held in September and called the Bandra Feast, is a major event for all communities in Bombay.

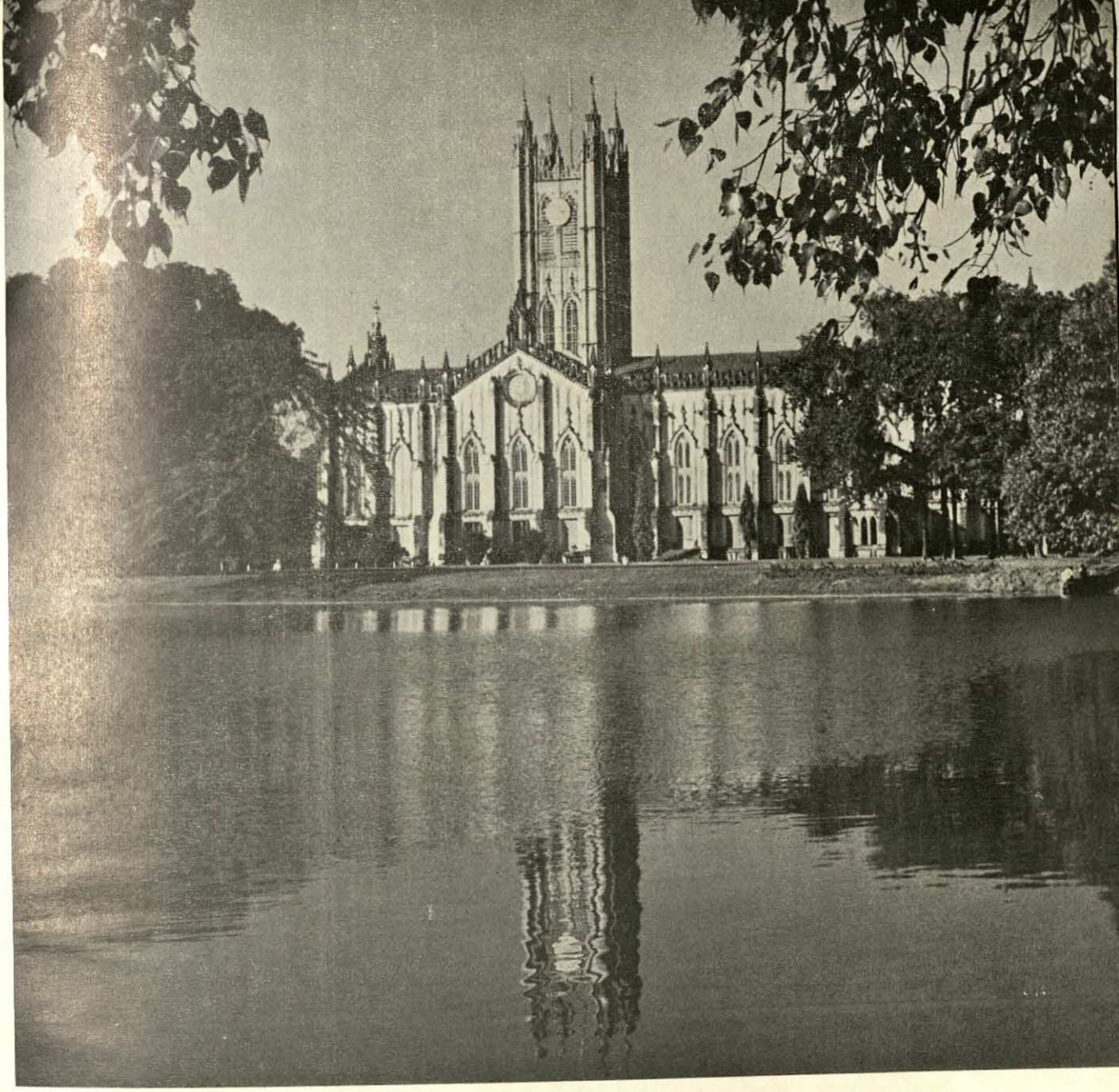
At Mokameh (Patna Diocese), the Church of Our Lady, Mother of Divine Grace, attracts pilgrims from all parts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa. The main Feast at the shrine is held annually in November.

Churches of Non-Catholic Eastern Rites

When Rome rose to pre-eminence in Europe and the Pope became the supreme head of the Catholics, there were Patriarchs in the East who were not subject to Rome. Originally, it would appear, there were five main Patriarchates in Christendom : Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria. Whether or not Rome had supremacy over other Patriarchates in ancient times, is a controversial matter into the details of which we need not go here. Suffice it to say that differences in doctrine, dissensions and political factors led, in the course of centuries, to an increase in the number of important Patriarchates in the East. Muslim kings often claimed the right to recognize or depose Christian Patriarchs in their dominions, but a deposed Patriarch in exile was often dearer to his congregations than the reigning one favoured by the Sultan. Again, when some Patriarch accepted the supremacy of the Pope, a rival, independent Patriarch almost immediately appeared.

We have seen that the Kerala Church obtained its Bishops, before the Portuguese period from the Patriarchs of Western Asia. We do not know what exact denominations these Bishops followed. While many historians hold the view that the Syrian Church, before the Portuguese, was Nestorian, others dispute it, and the records which would have thrown light on the subject were destroyed by the Portuguese in the Synod of Diamper (see Chapter I). What we know for certain is that practically all Kerala Christians became Catholics when the Portuguese subjected the Syrian church to Goa, and the present denominations in Kerala are mostly developments that took place after the Revolt of Coonen Cross.

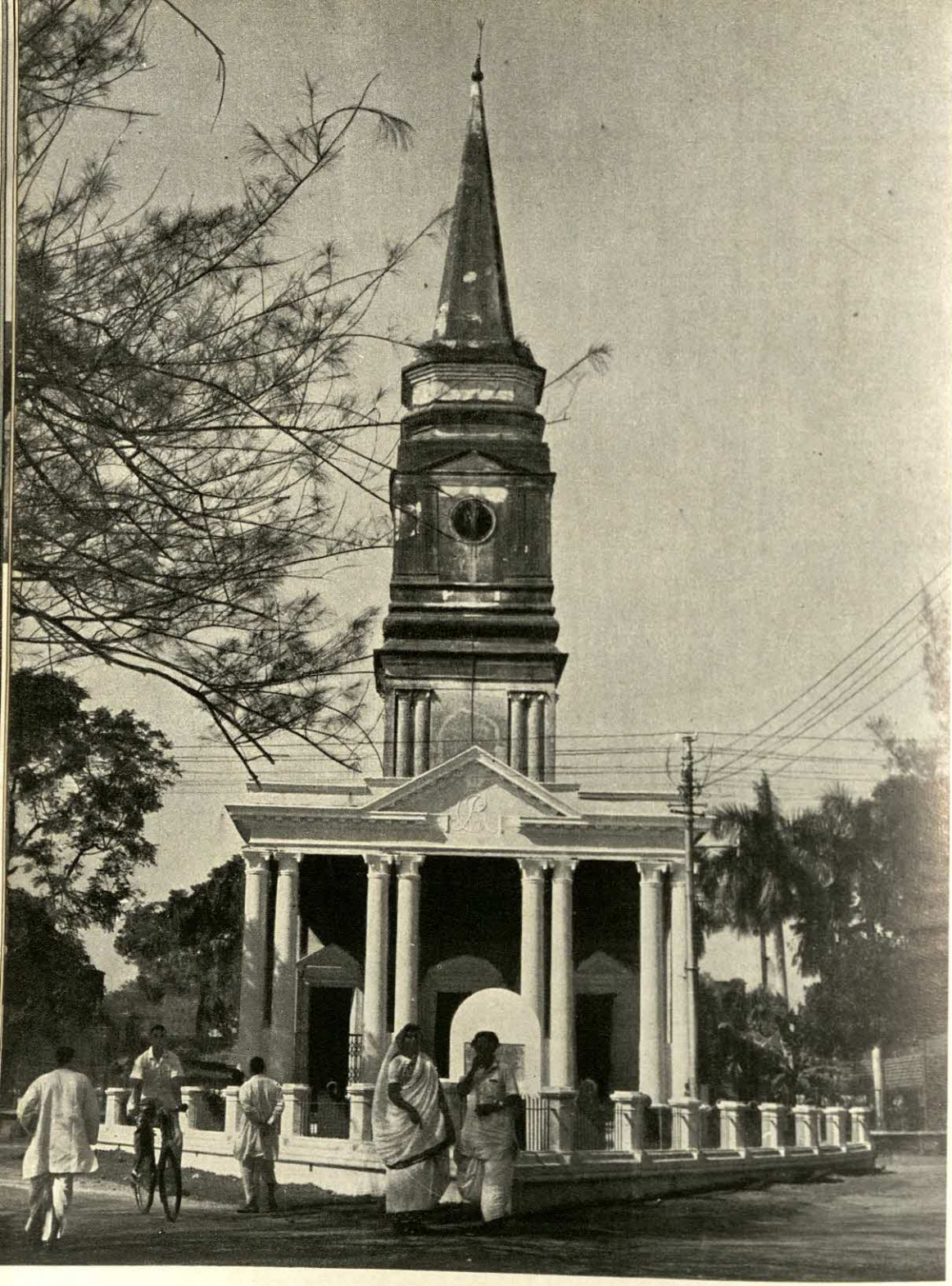
When news of the Revolt reached Rome, the Pope, wishing to reclaim the Syrians, sent a batch of Carmelite monks to Kerala as he was rightly informed that the people were particularly hostile to the Jesuits. The Carmelites reclaimed for Rome a large number of Syrians and their churches. These are now known as the Syrian Catholics. The rest of the Syrians, however, refused to be reconciled to Rome, and they got their Bishop from the Patriarch of Antioch who was an upholder of the monophysite doctrine of Christology (*i.e.* the doctrine of a single indivisible person and nature in Christ, as distinct from the Roman



St. Paul's Cathedral, Calcutta

St. James's Church, Delhi

Centenary Church (Methodist), New Delhi



Danish Church, Serampore

Catholic doctrine of one person and two natures in Christ) ably expounded by Jacobus (hence Jacobites). From the Jacobites of Kerala a section hived off under Protestant missionary influence, and founded the independent church of Mar Thomites. From the Syrian Catholics, again, a minority separated, claimed continuity from the pre-Portuguese period, and obtained a Bishop from the Patriarch of Babylon (also called Patriarch of the East) who was a follower of the Nestorian doctrine (see Chapter I) and these came to be called Nestorians or Chaldeans (as they follow the Chaldean Liturgy). But they prefer to call themselves members of the Church of the East.

Followers of eastern rites are confined to Kerala except, of course, the Armenians. The Armenians (see Chapter I) have their independent Catholicos following the monophysite persuasion but a good many of them are Uniats or Catholics, who use the Eastern Liturgy and recognize the supremacy of the Pope. The Armenians are found in the bigger cities of India, and they have an important church in Calcutta.

Jacobite Churches

The ecclesiastical head of the Jacobite church in India is known as the Catholicos*; he has his headquarters at Kottayam in Kerala. Though formally subject to the Patriarch of Antioch, he enjoys practical autonomy in the administration of churches in India.

The Jacobites are an important community in Kerala. They have over 800 churches, mostly in Kerala, distributed in nine dioceses, each under a Bishop. The diocesan Cathedrals and headquarters are : The Kadisha Church, Quilon; Mar Basil's, Pathanamthitta; Bethany Church, Thiruvalla; Cheria Palli, Kottayam; St. Thomas Church, Muvvattupuzha; Seminary Church, Alwaye; Seminary Church, Koratti; Mar Aphraim Seminary, Chingavanom (Sudist, see Chapter I); and Jacobite Orthodox Church, Calicut.

The Church of the East (Nestorian)

Congregations of this once powerful church of Asia are now few. Due to periodical persecution in the Mesopotamian region where the Patriarchate was established, the incumbents had to change their Sees and residences very often. The present Patriarch lives in exile in America due to hostile conditions in his home See.

The Church has only one Bishop and Cathedral in India, at Trichur, Kerala. The congregation claims continuity from the pre-Portuguese period and maintains that there were Nestorians in Kerala even during the Portuguese period in outlying areas inaccessible to the Portuguese.

Mar Thomites

The Mar Thomites, as we have seen, are a section of Syrians who came under the influence of Protestant missionaries in the 19th century and founded a Reformed Church in Kerala. They, however, follow the episcopal principle in church government, and their Metropolitan is at Thiruvalla. The church is independent and the Metropolitan is considered the equal of other heads of independent churches, by virtue of the Apostolic tradition of the Kerala Church. The Mar Thomites, like other Reformed denominations, claim that they have revived the teachings and

* For Armenians the Patriarch is a lesser hierarch than the Catholicos, but for Jacobites the Patriarch is higher.

STATE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION BHOPAL

faith of early Christians, and take their name from Mar Thoma (Apostle Thomas).

The Mar Thomites have three Bishops, with the principal churches at Adoor, Maramon and Kottayam (all in Kerala). At Kozenchery too they have an important church.

Protestant Churches

The Reformation, as is well known, came rather late in the history of the church but obtained an extraordinary hold on the expanding nations of Europe who followed in the wake of the Iberians. After a formative period and consolidation, the Protestant Churches embarked upon a vigorous course of missionary activity throughout the world. Missionaries of Dutch, Danish, German, British and American extraction were mainly responsible for the spread of the different Protestant denominations in India. The earliest settlements of the Europeans who came to India after the Portuguese were at Surat. When Vasco Da Gama landed in Calicut in 1498, it must be remembered, Babar, the founder of the Moghul Empire, was a youngster fighting for his patrimony in Samarkand, but when Sir Thomas Roe, the first English ambassador came to India in 1615, Jehangir, the fourth Moghul Emperor, was reigning, and the fame of the Great Moghul had reached Europe. Under the Moghuls, who had extensive commercial contacts with the Muslim countries of the West, Surat had risen as the most important port of the empire and the main point of embarkation for pilgrims bound for Mecca.

The Christian population of Surat at the time was not numerous enough to need a church but cemeteries were absolutely essential. So no church in Surat has come down to us but important cemeteries have, and the size of the existing monuments of the early English and the Dutch who died in the port would indicate that the local notions about building big tombs had infected Europeans too.

Church building by Protestants in India had humble beginnings. The members of the Reformed Churches who first came to India were merchants and the Directors of East India Companies were averse to such unprofitable enterprises as church building. Hence the early Protestant churches in India were built either by pious individuals or impecunious missionaries who had to support themselves and their congregations from meagre funds. St. Mary's Church, Madras, the first English Church in India, for instance, was built (1680) mainly by the munificence of Elihu Yale. St. John's, Calcutta (1770), was the private property of the Swedish missionary Kiernander, and when he went bankrupt, the church was seized by the official liquidator and sold in auction! St. James' Church, Delhi (1841), was built by Col. Skinner. Similarly the first Lutheran church in India was built in Tranquebar by the missionaries Ziegenbalg and Plutschau, in 1711, out of their own resources, and it was not a very imposing building either.

Towards the middle of the 19th century the wealth, power and prestige of the East India Company had risen, missionaries came in greater numbers, and congregations and funds were large enough to build churches in several parts of India. Practically all Protestant denominations, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Mennonites, the Salvation Army, etc., have congregations and churches in India at present. For our subject, however, the episcopal

divisions are more important as they have regular hierarchs and Cathedrals. But even the episcopal divisions, except perhaps the Anglicans, believe in greater number of congregations rather than in grand and ornate churches.

Anglican Churches

The Anglican church is, as is well known, the official Church of England and it has followed the episcopal tradition with considerable interest in building beautiful Cathedrals. The first Anglican See was erected in 1814 but it was in the year 1847 that the first Anglican Cathedral, St. Paul's, Calcutta, was built. This Cathedral enjoyed royal and viceregal patronage from the very beginning and has many historical associations and monuments commemorating the visits of royalty during the heyday of British power in India. Even after the capital of British India was transferred from Calcutta to Delhi, St. Paul's held a pre-eminent position as the Metropolitan See of the Anglican Church.

The Anglican Church in India and adjoining British possessions attained autonomy in 1928 and was renamed the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon. After the partition of India, it came to be known as the Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon. In 1947 the southern dioceses merged with the Church of South India.

In addition to St. Paul's, the Metropolitan Cathedral at Calcutta, the Church has, in India, Cathedrals and Bishops at Amritsar, Shillong, Barrackpore, Bhagalpur, Bombay, Chota Nagpur, Delhi, Lucknow, Nagpur and Nandyal.

Methodist Churches

The episcopal division of the Methodist Church in India, which is part of the Methodist Church in Southern Asia, owes its origin and expansion mainly to American Missionary enterprise. Indian congregations of Methodists are divided into four areas, Delhi, Bombay, Hyderabad and Lucknow, with a Bishop and important church in each.

Church of South India

The Church of South India is an independent church formed in 1947 by the union of several Protestant denominations in South India. All the three main organisational principles obtaining among Protestants, *i.e.*, episcopal (government by Bishops), presbyterian (government by Presbyters or elders) and congregational (where each church and its congregation form an autonomous unit), are incorporated in the Church of South India. This is a remarkable achievement in Church union as these three principles of church government were usually at variance and were considered irreconcilable.

As the Church has retained the episcopal principle, it has its Bishops and Cathedrals. These are at : Coimbatore, Kottayam, Dornakal, Kanyakumari, Eluru, Madurai, Madras, Medak, Bangalore, Shoranur, Gooty, Trivandrum, Tiruchirapalli and Tirunelveli.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ayyar, L. K. Anantakrishna, *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians,* Ernakulam.

Brown, L.W., *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas,* Cambridge.

D'Souza, Herman, Rev. Fr., *In the Steps of St. Thomas,* Madras.

Ferroli, D., S.J., *The Jesuits in Malabar,* Bangalore.

Firth, C.B., *An Introduction to Indian Church History,* Madras.

Heras, H., S.J., *The Two Apostles of India,* Trichinopoly.

Hough, J., *A History of Christianity in India,* London.

Kaye, J. W., *History of Christianity in India,* London.

Maclagan, Edward, *The Jesuits and the Great Moghul,* London.

Ogilvie, J.N., *The Apostles of India,* London.

Rae, G.M., *The Syrian Church in India,* Edinburgh.

Sandys, E.T., & Westcott, G.F., *One Hundred and Seventy-five Years at the Old or Mission Church,* Calcutta.

Thomas, P., *Christians and Christianity in India and Pakistan,* London.

Tisserant, Cardinal, Eugene, *Eastern Christianity in India* (Authorised Adaptation from the French by E.R. Hambye, S.J.), Calcutta.

L112DPD/64—GIPF.

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION